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## Subaltern Virtuality: Virtual Hegemony and Domestic Architecture in Postcolonial World

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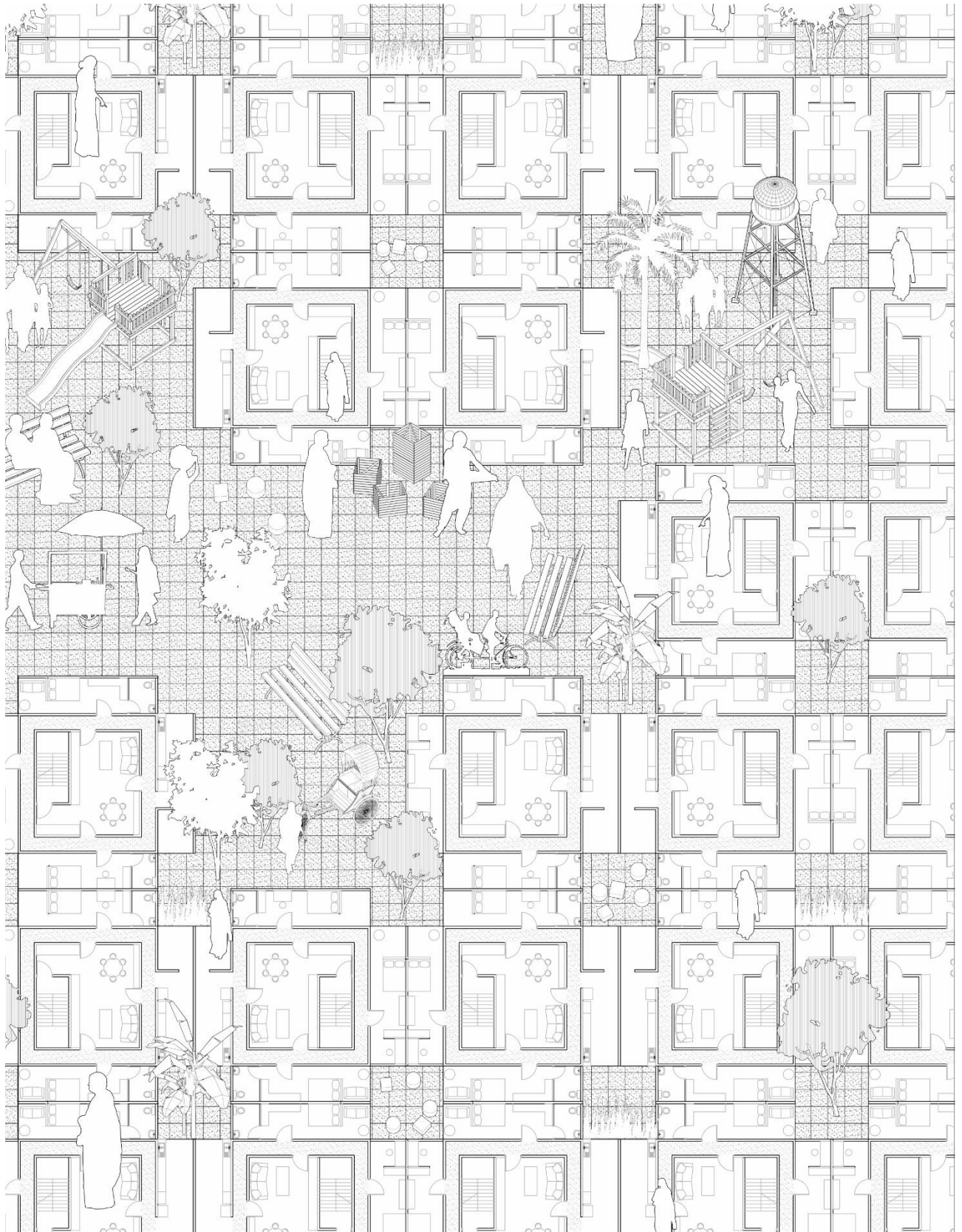
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# Subaltern Virtuality

Virtual Hegemony and Domestic Architecture in Postcolonial World

Nusrat Jahan Mim

Advisors: Bess Krietemeyer, PhD (Primary advisor)

Marcos Parga, PhD (Advisor)

Dec 16, 2018

Syracuse University School of Architecture

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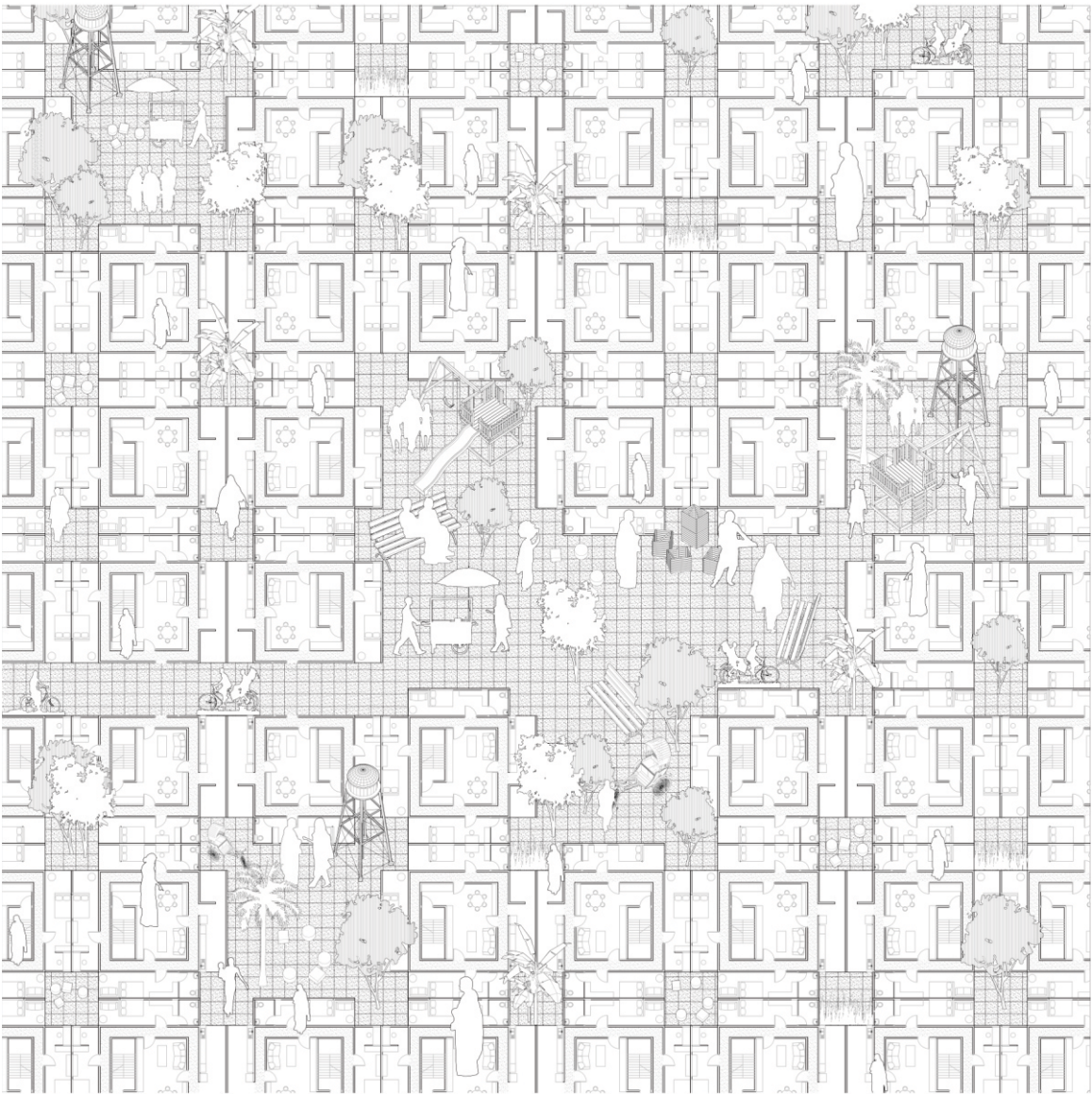
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Nusrat Jahan Mim  
Thesis Title: Subaltern Virtuality  
Thesis Subtitle: Virtual Hegemony and Domestic Architecture in Postcolonial World

Thesis Statement:  
Antonio Gramsci coined the term “subaltern” to reveal the presence of small social groups of people on the fringes of history. Subaltern can be perceived as negative space or position of disempowerment, a position without social or political agency, and access to the power or hegemony. Today the emergence of ubiquitous computing, virtual social network, and globalized image culture has created a new group of subalterns in the virtual world. Amounts of tweets, likes, views, shares etc. have started to appear as a dominating factor in determining the “status” of a person in the virtual world and hence, have created a virtual hegemony, where the new subalterns do not have any voice/control over any kind of virtual standardization (mostly westernized). Moreover, to become a part of the virtual community, they often feel forced to bring changes in their physical life and space, sometimes even by losing their cultural identities.  
This thesis explores, questions, and reimagines such virtual subaltern scenario in a form of architectural experimentation. As the context, the mushroomed middle-income apartment housing of Dhaka city (the capital of Bangladesh) has been chosen for its history of postcolonial struggle, existing resource constraints, and dense active participation in virtual social media (2 million active Facebook users in 2017). To project a certain “standard” image of their living space in virtual world, the apartment dwellers are changing the way they occupy their home traditionally. Instead of having home (single/multifamily) as a unified architectural entity, now there is a “front stage”, where documentation for social media takes place and a backstage – the real home. Based on 4 different scenarios/cases from the context, this thesis develops a series of speculative visual representations of apartment spaces/complex, which reveals conflicts between the cultural identity of the subalterns and the dichotomy of front and backstage. Rather than trying to solve such conflict as an architectural problem, the speculations offer radical alternatives to provoke response from the subalterns and to raise critical thoughts around such virtual domination.

Image Caption: Speculative visualization: housing genetics and postcolonial agency of privacy  
Name of Thesis Advisor: Elizabeth Krietemeyer, Marcos Parga



## Thesis Claims:

Antonio Gramsci coined the term “subaltern” to reveal the presence of small social groups of people on the fringes of history. Subaltern can be perceived as negative space or position of disempowerment, a position without social or political agency, and access to the power or hegemony. Today the emergence of ubiquitous computing, virtual social network, and globalized image culture has created a new group of subalterns in the virtual world. Amounts of tweets, likes, views, shares etc. have started to appear as a dominating factor in determining the “status” of a person in the virtual world and hence, have created a virtual hegemony, where the new subalterns do not have any voice/control over any kind of virtual standardization (mostly westernized). Moreover, to become a part of the virtual community, they often feel forced to bring changes in their physical life and space, sometimes even by losing their cultural identities.

This thesis explores, questions, and reimagines such virtual subaltern scenario in a form of architectural experimentation. As the context, the mushroomed middle-income apartment housing of Dhaka city (the capital of Bangladesh) has been chosen for its history of postcolonial struggle, existing resource constraints, and dense active participation in virtual social media (2 million active Facebook users in 2017). To project a certain “standard” image of their living space in virtual world, the apartment dwellers are changing the way they occupy their home traditionally. Instead of having home (single/multifamily) as a unified architectural entity, now there is a “front stage”, where documentation for social media takes place and a backstage – the real home. Based on 4 different scenarios/cases from the context, this thesis develops a series of speculative visual representations of apartment spaces/complex, which reveals conflicts between the cultural identity of the subalterns and the dichotomy of front and backstage. Rather than trying to solve such conflict as an architectural problem, the speculations offer radical alternatives to provoke response from the subalterns and to raise critical thoughts around such virtual domination.

## Background

### Who are the new 'Subaltern'?

'Subaltern' can be defined as the general attribute of subordination whether it is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way.<sup>1</sup> Subaltern can be perceived as a negative space or position of disempowerment, a position without social/political agency, a position without access to the power/hegemony. Being derived from the work of cultural hegemony, Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'subaltern classes' posits his concerns about the intellectual's role in the cultural and political movement of the subalterns into the hegemony.<sup>2</sup> Later, this idea of subaltern became an intellectual method of studying the discourse of post-colonialism in the Indian subcontinent.

The theoretical framework generated by the 'Subaltern Studies' collective (including Ranajit Guha, Patha Chatarjee, Shahid Amin et al) was primarily based upon the criticism against the elitist historiography of the colonial India. This collective of intellectuals started to argue that to understand the construction of the subaltern, it is necessary to understand the historical events of colonial India through the lens of subalternity. Ranajit Guha in his book 'Elementary aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India', emphasizes on the existence of 'subaltern consciousness' behind the peasant movement, which he believes, has been ignored in the historiography populated by the documentations of the British and Indian elites. Following Gramsci's thought, Guha says,

*"... there is no room for pure spontaneity in history. This is precisely where they err who fail to recognize the trace of consciousness in the apparently unconstructed movement of the mass."*<sup>3</sup>

The early studies of subaltern collectives were hence focused on to investigate, identify and measure specific nature of the subaltern group of the society. Spivak criticizes such narrative specificity of the subaltern by the intellectuals, as she believes this is a 'representation' of the subaltern in the discourse<sup>4</sup>. The subaltern cannot speak for itself (here, speaking as we understand it as generating discourse). Spivak says,

*"When we come to the concomitant question of the consciousness of the subaltern, the notion of what the work cannot say becomes important. In the semioses of the social text, elaborations of insurgency stand in the place of 'the utterance.' The sender - 'the peasant' - is marked only as a pointer to an irretrievable consciousness. As for the receiver, we must ask who is 'the real receiver' of an 'insurgency?' The historian, transforming 'insurgency' into 'text for knowledge,' is only one 'receiver' of any collectively intended social act. With no possibility of nostalgia for that lost origin, the historian must suspend (as far as possible) the clamor of his or her own consciousness (or*

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<sup>1</sup> Guha, Ranajit, and Vinayak Chaturvedi. "Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial." (2000): 6.

<sup>2</sup> Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the subaltern speak?." *Can the subaltern speak? Reflections on the history of an idea*(1988): 21-78.

<sup>3</sup> Guha, Ranajit. *Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India*. Duke University Press, 1999.(page-5)

<sup>4</sup> Bhadra, Gautam. নিম্নবর্গের ইতিহাস



*consciousness-effect, as operated by disciplinary training), so that the elaboration of the insurgency, packaged with an insurgent-consciousness, does not freeze into an 'object of investigation,' or, worse yet, a model for imitation. 'The subject' implied by the texts of insurgency can only serve as a counter-possibility for the narrative sanctions granted to the colonial subject in the dominant groups.*"<sup>5</sup>

Spivak's contribution to the subaltern studies liberated subalternism from being constructed only as a method, ideology, framework to understand the disposition of subaltern identity as the other of the elite class and added a lens of political heterogeneity outside the domain of the European institutional learning. Later she developed her arguments around the concept of the "new subaltern" (which is not only the peasant society anymore), where cognitive infrastructures (being established, implemented and monitored),

*".... allow subaltern resistance to be located and heard. In the interim years what has happened is, the subaltern has become greatly permeable. There is plenty of writing showing the fragmentary lexicalization of generally the US cultural idiom into the otherwise heterogeneous subaltern everyday all over the world. The subaltern is now permeable but there is no permeability in the opposite direction."*<sup>6</sup>

Spivak mentions about the transformation of subalternity into property, indigenous knowledge into intellectual property, the conversion of indigenous knowledge into data repeatedly through her work.

My research project is interested to explicate the permeable nature of the subaltern that Spivak mentioned and its potential to generate knowledge in the discourse of spatial design tools and designed spaces. In my research the word subaltern is used to define those consumers of advanced technology who, with a background of colonial struggle and resource constraints, have no voice over the design, globalization and proliferation of ubiquitous computing facilities. Fieldwork of this research project has been done in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The study only focused on middle-income generating apartment dwellers. The significant part of my field study has been designed and executed to understand the subaltern consciousness in a context, where social, cultural, and hence political imperatives are rendered through virtual means of communication.

## Virtuality : Online representation and impression management

Sharing a piece of information with social peer over online digital media impacts a person's image or impression. Erving Goffman, in his celebrated work, "The Presentation of Self in everyday life", has explained how a person manages their impression before their social peer by the act of 'performance', which may be significantly different from their actual life. Goffman calls this platform of performance 'the

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<sup>5</sup> Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the subaltern speak?." *Can the subaltern speak? Reflections on the history of an idea*(1988): 21-78.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=2ZHH4ALRFHw>

front stage' which is influenced by the audience and is deviated from the performer's real self (backstage)<sup>7</sup>. Goffman's theory is widely used to understand people's online behavior over social media nowadays by Human-computer interaction scholars.

The notion of virtuality in architecture correlates essentially to visual aspects of physical space that can be simulated by graphics, which provides not only a visual illusion but also psychological involvement for the audience.<sup>8</sup> Virtual space can be perceptually sensed, by virtual presence it can be modified or shaped. Thus, virtual mediums have eventually become one of the most successful techniques of representation of space that helps architects to evaluate spatial values of their project as well as to communicate with the clients or the collaborators. In this research, however, the concept of virtuality is not limited to the domain of simulation, representation, evaluation of architectural products. Rather the term virtuality here means the presentation physical space associated with "subaltern self" through the shared images in the virtual world of social media. Such virtual representation of (domestic) physical space thus becomes the "front Stage" and physical space of real world becomes backstage. Like what Goffman says about the public presentation of self, the virtuality constructed by social media images starts to behave/perform differently than its corresponding physical space. Such difference of 'performance' is not spontaneous; rather is deeply rooted with the social, cultural, temporal values of the subaltern.

## Criteria of Evaluation:

The objective of this research is to create speculative visualizations, not to identify a problem and solve that with architectural vocabularies, rather to make the invisible issue of virtual domination and with impractical speculations criticizing the standardization of design right at that point when virtual and physical world started to get intertwined in a postcolonial context. By defamiliarizing the existing design components of a Dhaka apartment, this thesis tries to create a lens through which the subalterns can perceive the presence of virtual hegemony in their day to day life and space and hence, can react to it. This thesis started with two basic arguments: a) with the advancement in ubiquitous computing and virtual social media, a new subaltern has emerged in the virtual world, and b) due to virtual hegemony and standardization in image culture, physical spaces are changing, on which the new subalterns do not have any voice or control. To support this argument, a two month long ethnographic field study has been in the city of Dhaka. From the pool of data four scenarios of virtual domination over a spatial setting have been developed and analyzed through the lens of cultural situatedness, social and religious values, and hybridized influence of social media. For each scenario, critical speculations have been developed to generate response among the subalterns, which connects it back to Spivak's quote, "Can we (academician,

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<sup>7</sup> Goffman, Erving. "The Presentation of Self in." *Butler, Bodies that Matter* (1959).

<sup>8</sup> Čahtarević, Rada. "Virtuality in architecture: from perspective representation to augmented reality." *Facta universitatis-series: Architecture and Civil Engineering* 6, no. 2 (2008): 235-241.

professionals, students) behave in such a way that response will come from the other side (the subaltern side)?”<sup>9</sup>

## Research Methodology:

As a testbed of this investigation I picked only the apartment households of the city of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. My research project develops its arguments based on the data gathered from two sources. First, a two months long fieldwork, interviews, and participant observation was conducted with the selected residents of Dhaka's apartment housings of Shantinagar, Moghbazar, Bailey Road, Shajahanpur, Mirpur, Badda, Motijheel, Dhanmondi areas. These areas are mostly populated with middle income generating people. The residents were selected primarily based on my personal connections. Participants included both men and women who either own apartments in an apartment complex or are tenants of such apartments for at least one year. The apartment sizes ranged from 900 sft to 200-sft (approx.). 15 families were studied closely to document their living condition, social interaction spaces (both online and offline), mapping their apartment in terms of image (online and offline) density, changes made in the apartments from time to time and their online/ offline influences, stories behind popular images uploaded in social media, problems (if any) with their social media activities associated with household spaces etc. I conducted separate semi-structured interviews of the family members (age 18-52) of these 15 families including student, businessman, service-holder, government employee, housewife etc. All of them are active users of social media (either Facebook or Instagram). A significant part of the interviews is consisted of conversation about their engagement in social media in terms of representing the spaces of their household and associated challenges, experiences, expectations, resistances etc. with that. At least one person from each family participated in these interviews and gave me permission to visit their social media profile to study the images they uploaded from time to time. They also shared the stories of the temporary or permanent changes they have made in their apartment based on their social media activities. These interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour based on the availability of the family members. Some families allowed to take photos inside their apartments, some didn't, however, every family allowed me to make sketches of important physical features of their houses. Since the photos I have studied from their Facebook or Instagram profile directly related to their identity, most of the families requested me to not show those photos directly in any of my presentations in the thesis.

Second way of collecting data was online survey. 178 people (age 18-60, including men and women) responded this structured online questionnaire. All of them are apartment dwellers of Dhaka city and belong to middle-class income group. Besides the demographic questions, 17 questions were asked about their experience of uploading images on social media. Questions were asked in Bangla so that people feel comfortable in writing and conveying their message accurately. This survey was anonymous, and the

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<sup>9</sup> Spivak, Gayatri. "The Rohingya Issue in a Global Context." Speech, Hollis E. Cornell Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall, Ithaca, October 30, 2017.



questionnaire was shared with public through Facebook. Data collected from both types of sources helped me to develop the disposition of the subaltern virtuality in Dhaka's context.

The third source was interviewing young architects and interior designers, mostly focusing on the change of client demands over the time, shift of client interest etc. and the fourth source was collection of floor plans of apartment units from the 90s to 2018 to map the evolution pattern of Dhaka's apartment.

I tried to structure the quantitative data in a formal visualization and tried to map the information like what are most popular space in an apartment where most of the dwellers take images for facebook, which spaces have never been documented virtually, how imaging apartment changes with the age of the user, how temporal conditions shape the necessity of documentation, filter usage, the new concept of privacy after facebook etc. From the pool of data, both quantitative (Figure 1 and 2) and qualitative, I have developed four scenarios about how virtual demands are shaping the use of apartment spaces by the subalterns. These scenarios have been repeatedly mentioned by the participants of my field work.

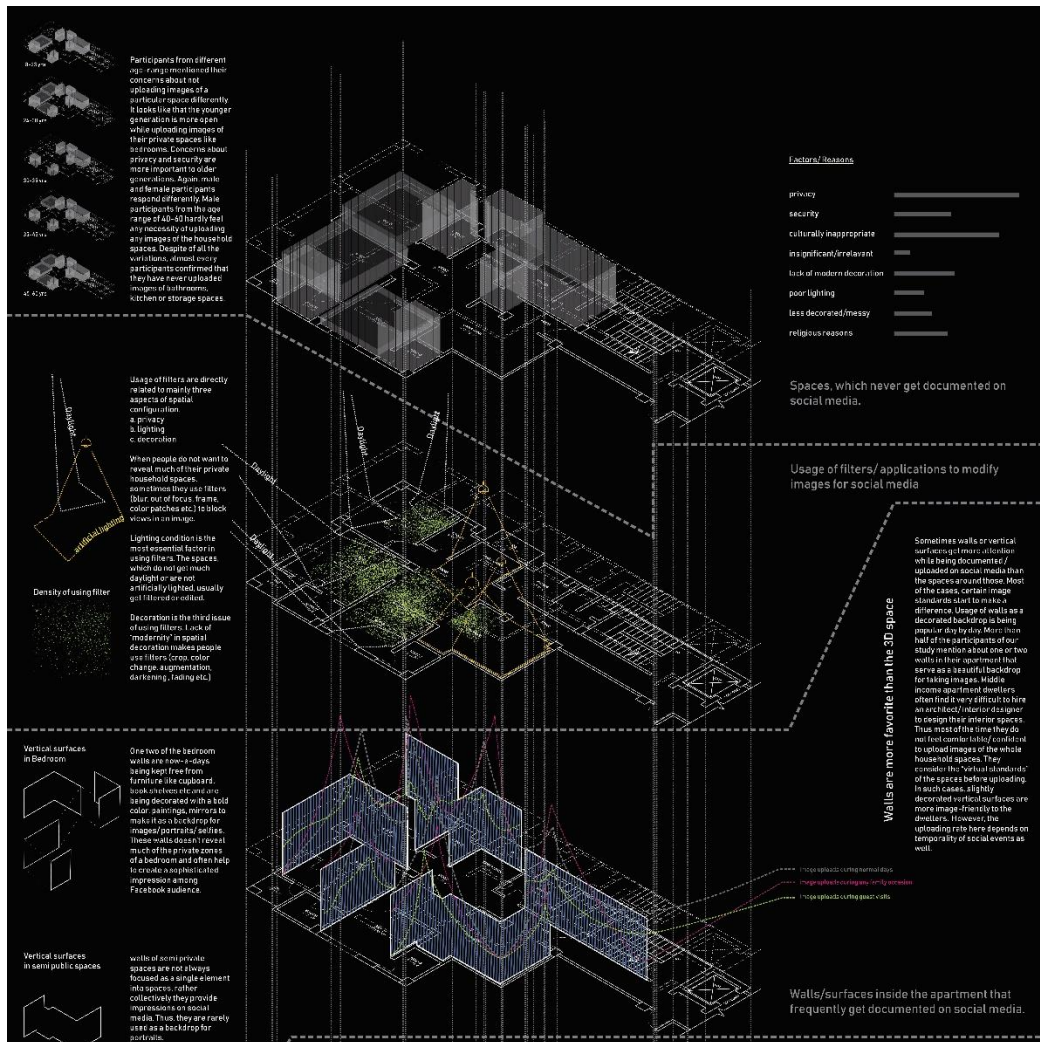


Figure 1:Qualitative Data Board -1

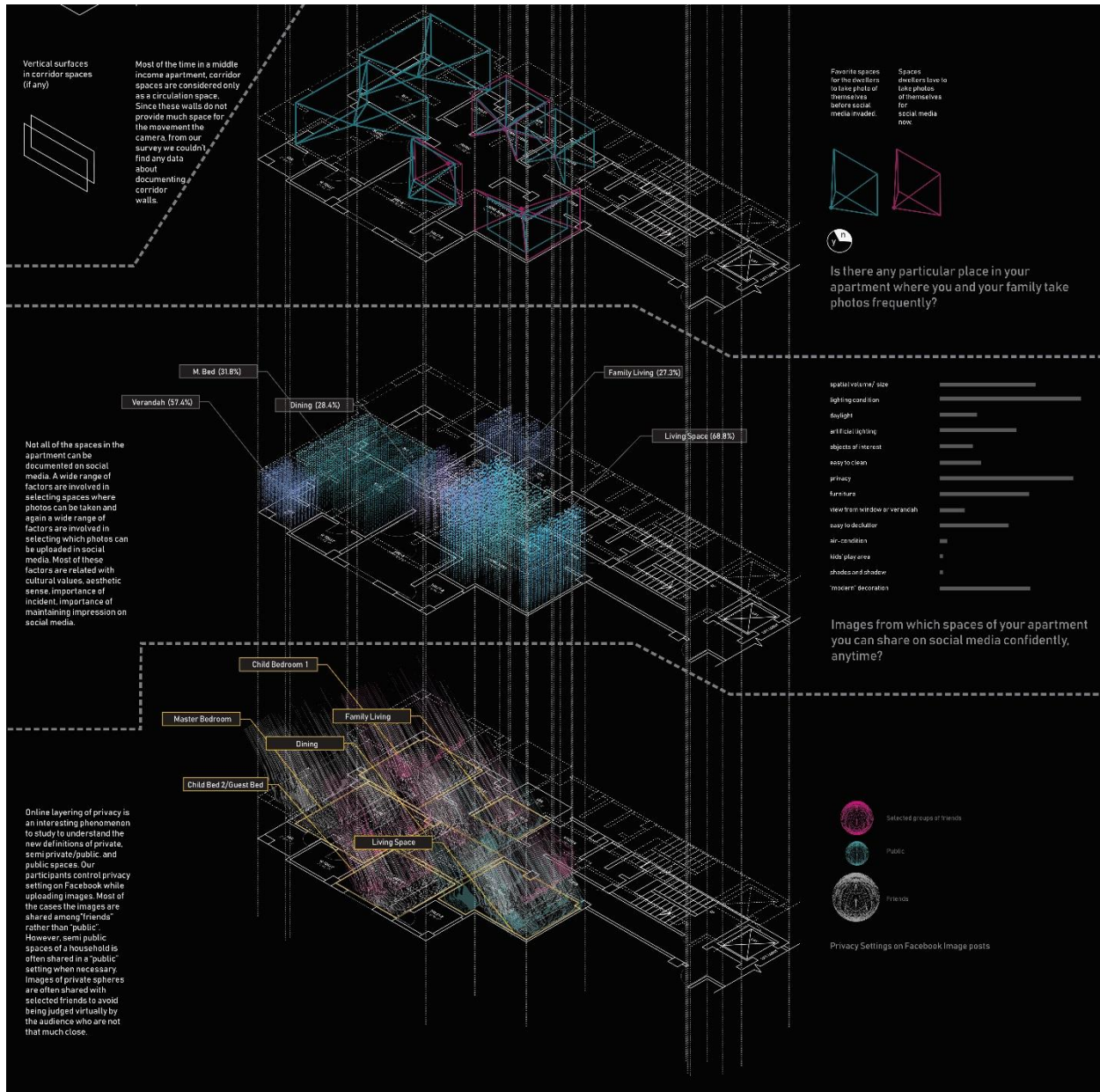


Figure 2: Qualitative Data Board 2

## Case Studies and Speculative Experimentation:

From the pool of data, both quantitative and qualitative, I have developed four scenarios about how virtual demands are shaping the use of apartment spaces by the subalterns. These are: i) marginalization of Veranda, ii) isolation of cultural values and mobilities, iii) development of frontstage and backstage through repetition, iv) elimination of kitchen. These scenarios have been repeatedly mentioned by the participants of my field work.

### Marginalization of Veranda:

Veranda is an essential element and highly culturally active zone in Dhaka's apartment. It establishes the only visual and social connection between apartment dwellers and the world outside from their houses. Although its environmental purpose is to avoid direct heat from the sun and keep the bedrooms cooler than outside temperature, its practical usages range from drying clothes to storing goods sometimes.

The evolution of veranda from the 90s till the beginning of Facebook era reveals important information about spatial changes in a traditional veranda, although they are negligible. Hence, my case study shows how the veranda started to evolve after Facebook has become popular. Mrs. Taslima (40, housewife) used her veranda to dry clothes, storing items like broken utensils, old clothes, empty cans, jars, which she could reuse for different purposes. All these are traditional Bengali use of Veranda. Some of these practices are sustainable and reduce the energy consumption of a building. After she started to use Facebook, she watched her Facebook friends sharing photos of their verandahs... neat and tidy, represented not as an informal space but as a formal one with no drying clothes, foods, storage etc., only offering view toward outside cityscape. To get acceptance in her virtual friend circle and to become one of them, Mrs. Taslima felt the necessity to bring changes in her veranda. Except for using it entirely for day to day necessities, she converted half of her verandah into a more decorated one, "imageable" for Facebook. The other half is being used for traditional usages. Reduction of Veranda space to meet virtual demand has converted her bedroom as a drying space, which doesn't work properly, she cannot afford drying machine as well. She says,

*"...first, I do not have any other space in my apartment that receives direct sunlight like the verandah, moreover it's a small apartment and doesn't have much storage space. My verandah was an excellent space for storing items for recycling and reuse. Now I must compromise. I do not want my virtual friends to think that I am not "modern" like them. It's been a pressure on me. However, opinions and acceptance from my Facebook friends are important to me."*

This is how certain kind of image culture has started to bring change in physical space. Mrs. Taslima has started to overlook or sacrifice spaces, activities, sustainable practices due to this "virtual demand". Her actual verandah started to disappear behind the camera.

*Figure 3: Quantitative Data Visualization Board*



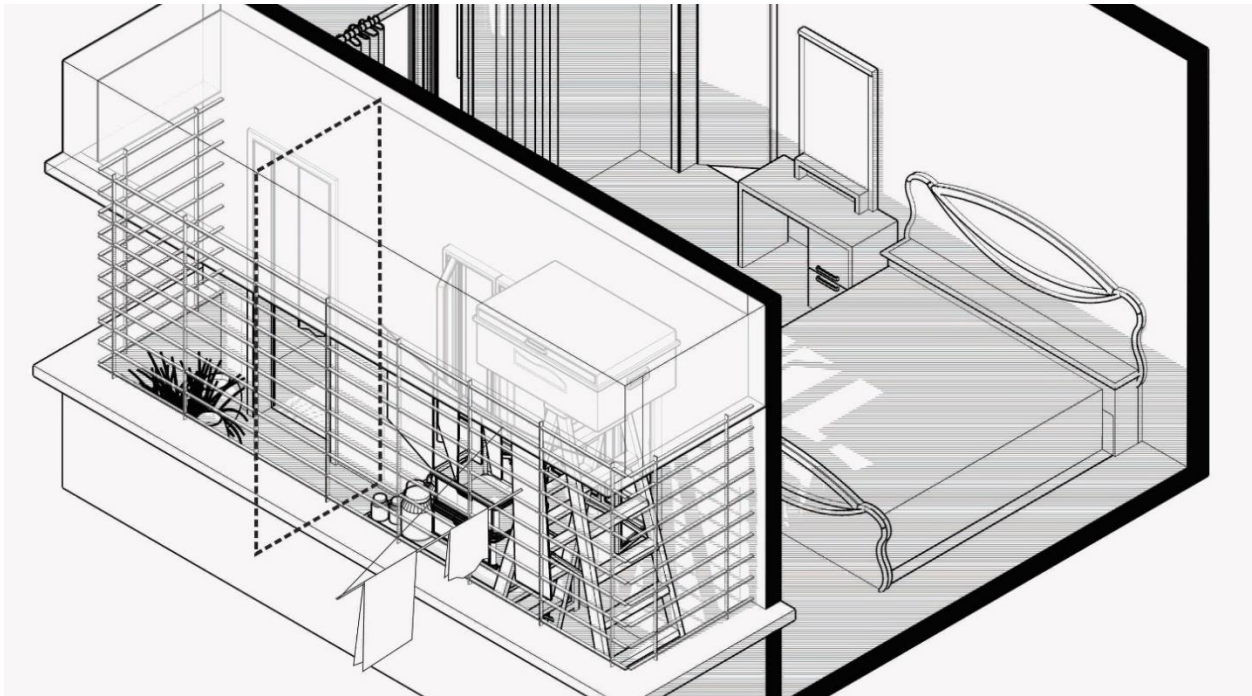


Figure 4: Mrs. Taslima's veranda and adjacent Bedroom.

Critical Speculation for this scenario involves more vivid version of this virtual domination. Questions arise- to keep both virtual and physical need should we extend the veranda that may start to eat up space from adjacent bedroom? Should we create common staged veranda space that two adjacent apartments may share revealing some space that both apartment dweller can use for practical needs? Should we do the same thing for vertically adjacent apartments? Or what about thinking the Verandah as a vertically elongated one, where the daily necessary usages will happen in the lower part and Facebook imaging/staging will happen on the upper part. ... or pushing it even further... Hiding the practical uses of a verandah permanently. The way we see, perceive, use the veranda has already been changed. We have already started to Hide the contextual demands to meet virtual demands. Such marginalization of a culturally embedded space has potentials to bring change in traditional façade of Urban Dhaka. However, the social and cultural connection between a Bengali family and the context will be lost forever.

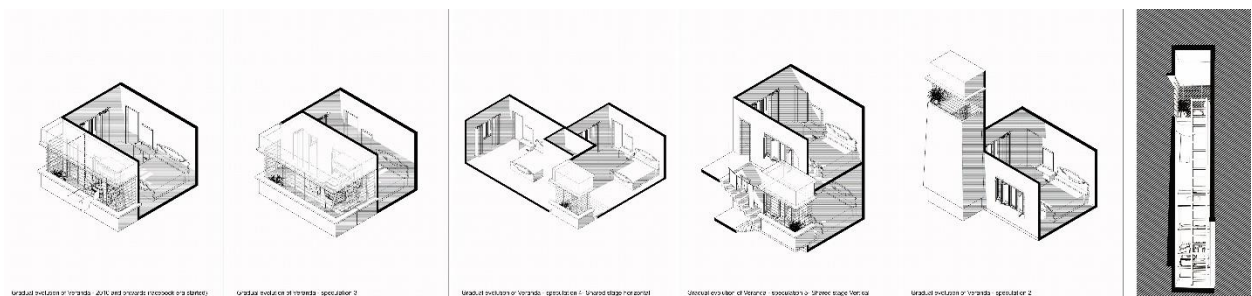


Figure 5: Speculative transformation of Mrs. Taslima's veranda



*Figure 6: Critically positioning new veranda (speculatively derived as a result of virtual domination) and old veranda (enables to be socio-culturally connected)*

### Isolation of cultural values and mobilities

Second scenario deals with privacy of a virtual subaltern. In Bangladeshi middle-income family culture, the idea of privacy is not a concept associated with individual, rather it's a family concept. During the day all the doors inside an apartment are kept open. This enables everyone from a family to develop a sense of belongingness with every single space of the house. The mother of the family usually has the highest control and access inside an apartment.

I interviewed a 45 years old school teacher, Mrs. Mazeda, who complained that Facebook has limited her movement inside her house. She doesn't have any Facebook account. But her college going son and daughter are active Facebook users and they keep uploading photos and videos all the time. Mrs. Mazeda practices some religious values. She wears hijab, means she covers herself except for the face when she goes outside. Since she doesn't wear hijab in home, she usually tries to avoid being in the pictures that her son and daughter snaps for social media. She says,

*“ my son plays guitar and he loved to upload videos. My daughter is always taking selfies. They mostly shoot in their rooms or in the living spaces. I do not know who are watching these photos and videos online. For me, it is like bringing the whole outside world in my house without maintaining any privacy. I usually try to remain in kitchen or my room, when they start taking pictures. I feel extremely uncomfortable to appear in photos without hijab and it's not possible for me to wear hijab even at my house.”*

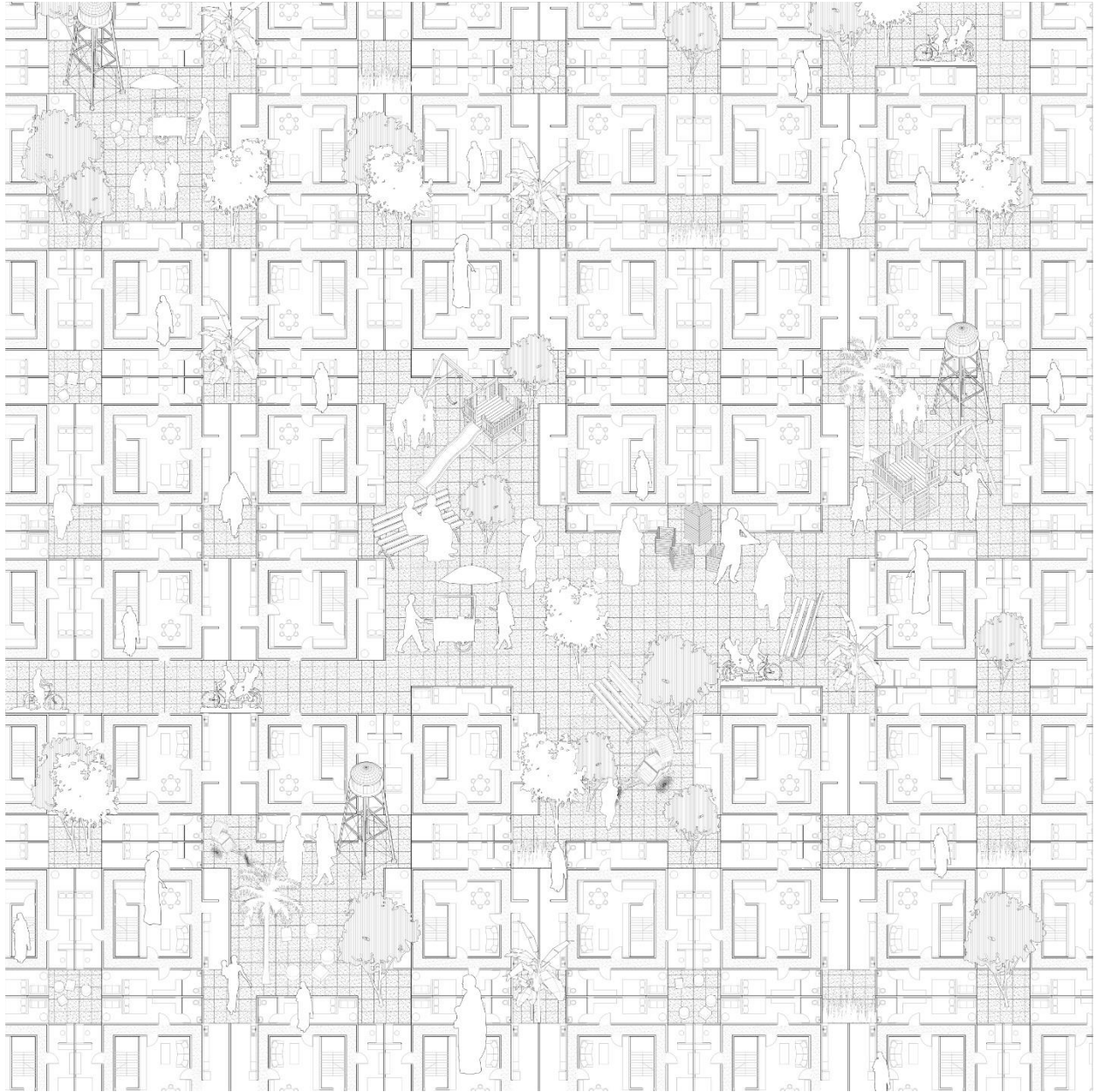


Figure 7: Mobilities of Mrs. Mazeda before and after Facebook invasion

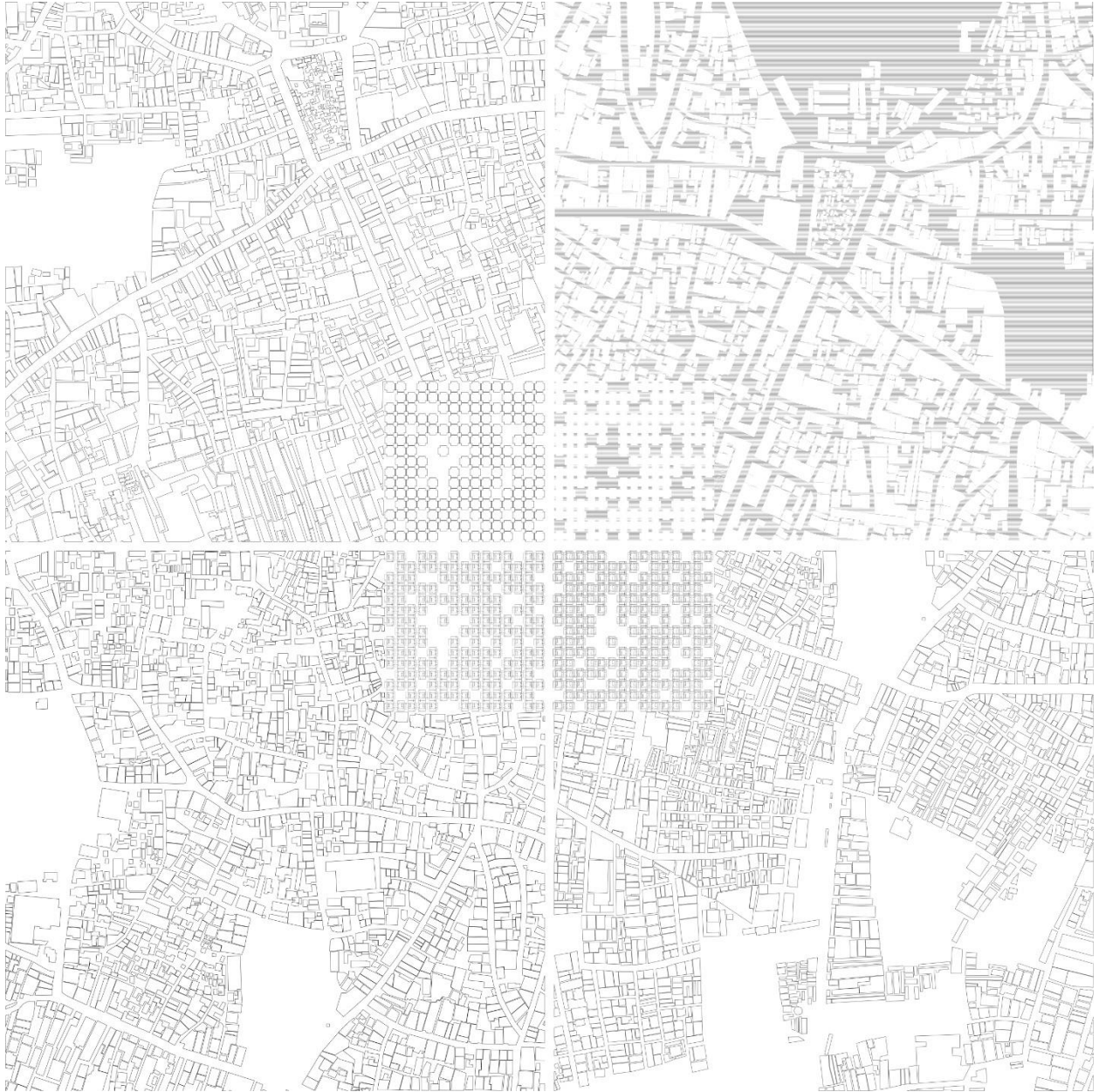
This is how her movement inside her own apartment becomes limited during the moments of Facebook photo-session. Doors started to close for her. Mrs. Mazeda is not the only person who is facing this problem. Social media user or not 65% of my participants from online survey mentioned that their family members or themselves sometimes get isolated due to this virtual zoning inside the house, where any space of their house can become a public zone, anytime.

Critical speculation for this scenario only focuses on the agency of this virtual subaltern - free movement at her own house. This particular speculation came up with a simple floor plan which emphasizes only the free circulation of the mother. By centralizing the Facebook public zone and having the circulation or movement area wrapped around we can create a floor plan where no matter what free circulation of the mom throughout the whole apartment can be ensured. The notion of such speculation is to show how a silent agency of a virtual subaltern has the potential of bringing genealogical change not only at unit level, but also at urban texture of Dhaka.





*Figure 8: Speculative floorplan developed from only the cultural and religious agency of a middle-income family's woman to make visible the aspect, which remains invisible in the existing pattern of using domestic spaces due to virtual domination.*



*Figure 9: Speculative visualization of the broader impact of addressing the agency of a subaltern at the urban level.*



### Development of frontstage and backstage through repetition

The third scenario is built upon the theory of Erving Goffman's celebrated work "The Presentation of Self in everyday life". Goffman explained how a person manages their impression before their social pier by the act of 'performance', which may be significantly different from their actual life. Goffman calls this platform of performance 'the front stage' which is influenced by the audience and is deviated from the performer's real self (backstage)<sup>10</sup>. To keep pace with virtual image culture, Bangladeshi subalterns have started to create pockets of front stages in their apartment.

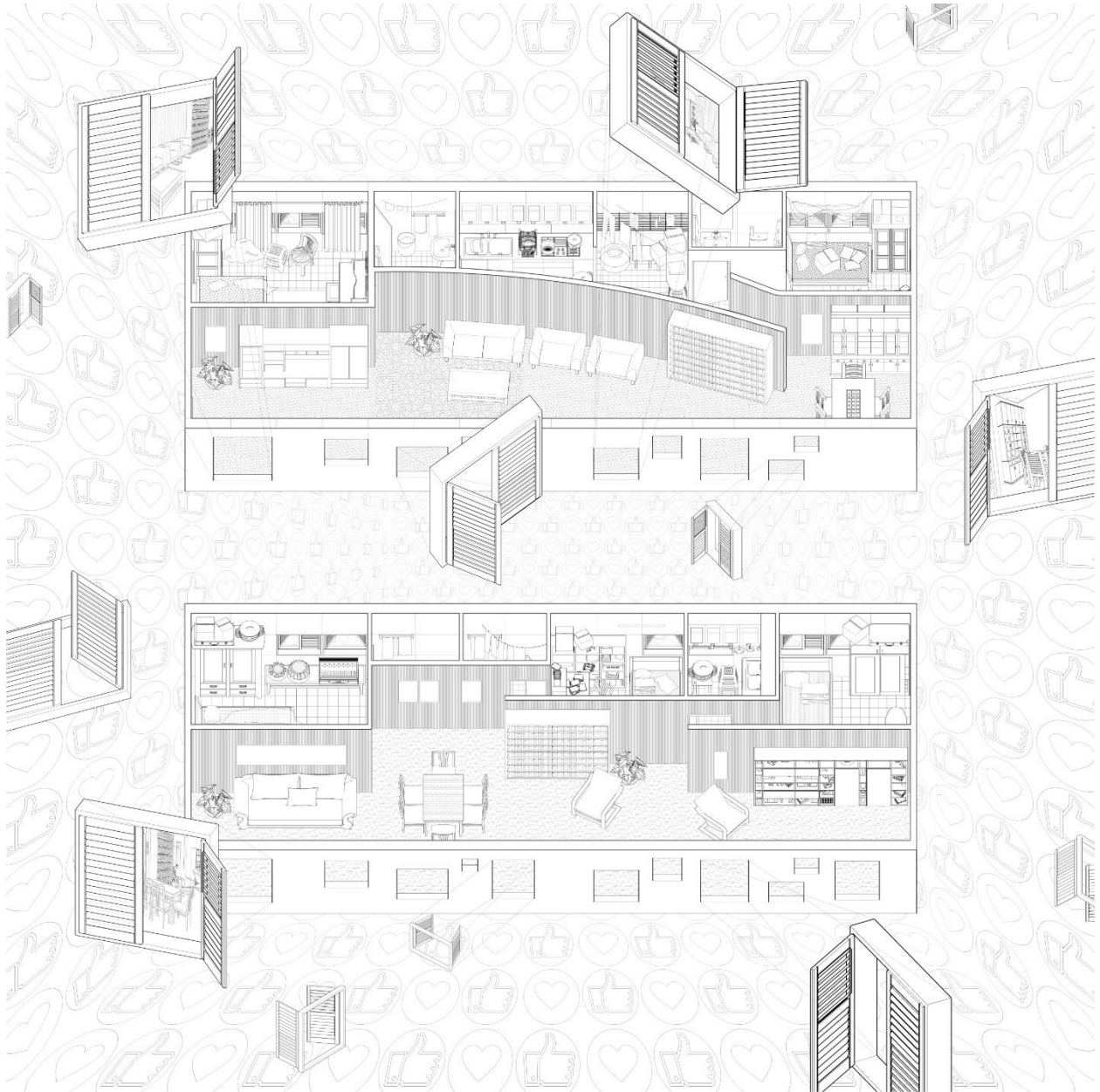
I interviewed Mr. and Mrs. Khan's family, who occupy a two-bedroom apartment. They have a daughter, who works in a bank. All 3 family members are active users of Facebook and have some pre-selected spots for taking pictures. For example, they have a blue wall at the girl's room and during any family get together, all of the guests love to take picture in front of that blue wall for their social media documentation of the event. The daughter says,

*"we keep these spots well decorated so that we can take pictures for Facebook here on any occasion. Rest of our apartment is not tidy and well-maintained. My friends upload their apartment photos on Facebook. I am not rich like them, we cannot afford new and modern designed furniture. To maintain the virtual standard, we picked some parts of our apartment, which we keep staged for Facebook photos. Those, who have never visited our apartment physically do not know how much different it is from our Facebook uploads."*

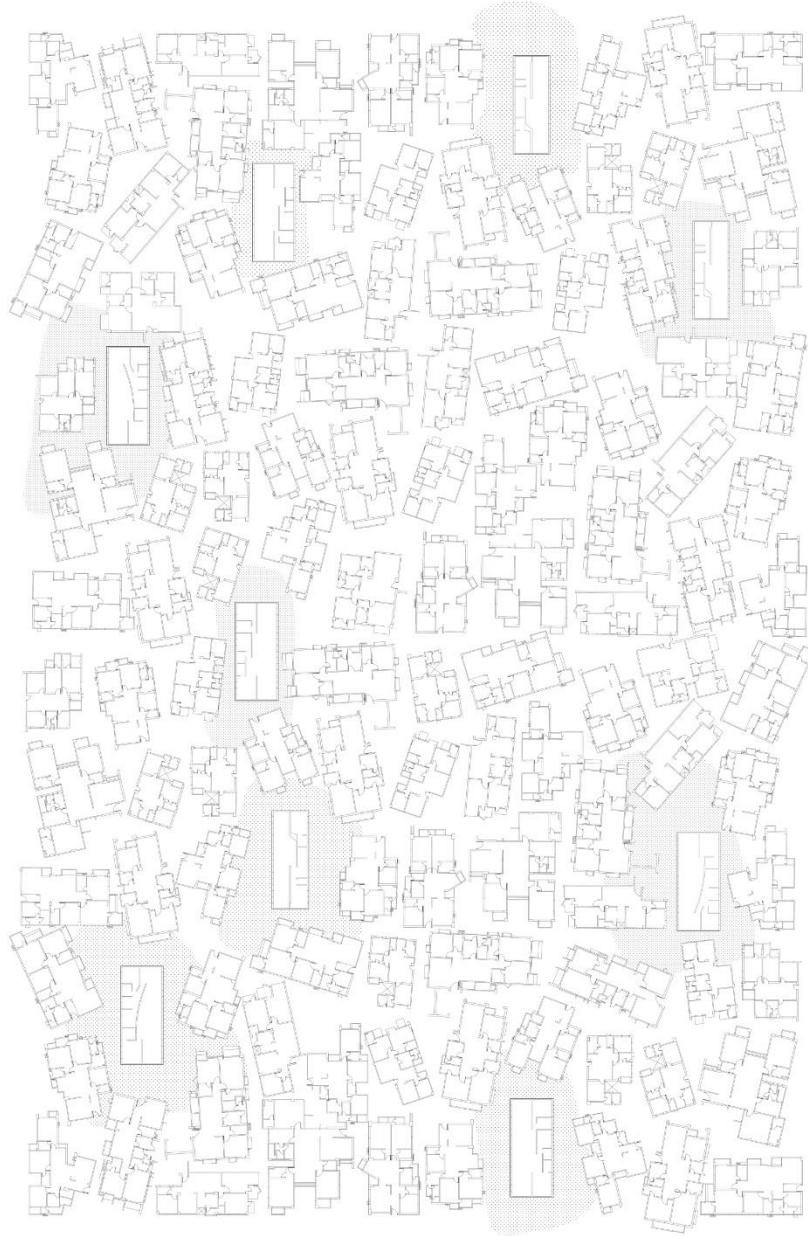
This family is the new subaltern, virtual subaltern. To follow an imposed standardization of apartment space on social media, they started dividing their apartment space in a new zoning pattern- front stage for Facebook and rest of the apartment as backstage. And this virtually dominated zoning system contradicts with the traditional zoning system of Dhaka apartments. The traditional apartment design follows a basic layout. The entrance of the apartment leads to the formal living space first which then flows to the dining and/or family living space depending upon the apartment size. Less space, no family living. The kitchen, kitchen veranda, and room for domestic help/ maid is directly connected with the kitchen. For a two-bedroom apartment, bedrooms come at the end. For a three- bedroom apartment, one bedroom, which is either used by guests or the unmarried male members of the family, is located near the entrance. So that when their friends come, mostly males, they will maintain a gap of privacy and space with the master bedroom and girl's bedroom. Traditionally, the spatial zoning and segregation was based on the concept of gender-based privacy, a core culturally embedded aspect. But now, virtual domination through standardization is pointing toward a new type of spatial segregation of space- the front stage for virtual Social media and the backstage for the actual world. Figure 8 depicts the new zoning literally into two halves. The urgency of opening windows toward virtuality is juxtaposed with the negligence toward healthy living at the back stage as a criticism. This particular form of virtual domination has actually attacked the genetics of apartment space in Dhaka by flattening the culturally embedded zoning hierarchy of Dhaka's middle-income apartment. (figure 9).

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<sup>10</sup> Goffman, Erving. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Vol. 13. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959.



*Figure 10: Speculative dichotomy of frontstage and backstage embedded in the cultural setting of Dhaka apartment dwellers.*



*Figure 11: Depiction of change in the genetics (initiated by virtual domination) of apartment space in Dhaka by flattening the culturally embedded zoning hierarchy of Dhaka's middle-income apartment*

### Elimination of kitchen:

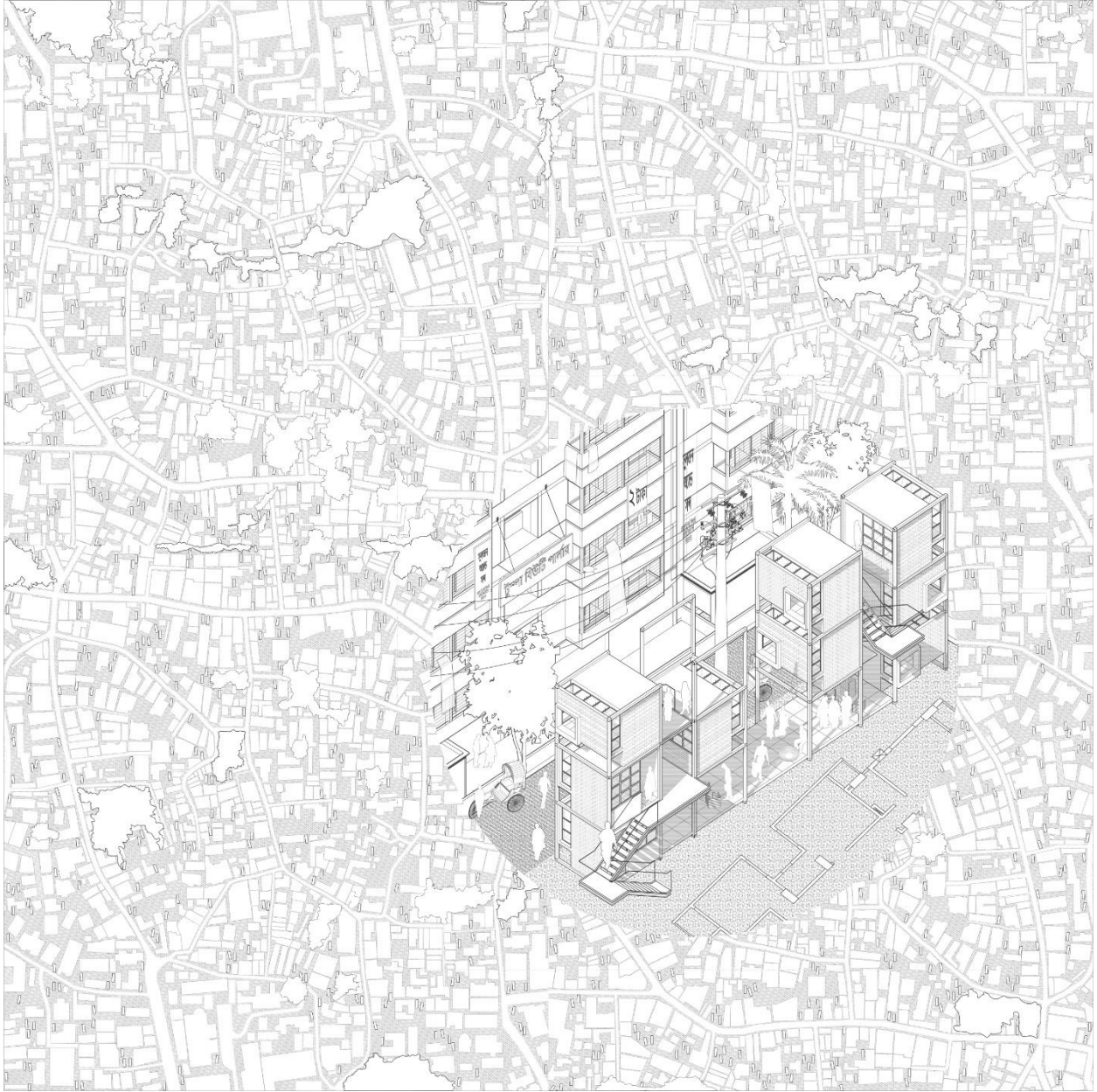
Image culture of social media has started to bring change in how middle-income apartment dweller of a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country sees kitchen. Before going to what are those impacts, we must understand the traditional cooking system in a Bangladeshi family. Cooking involves cutting cleaning vegetables meat, fish etc. as people buy these fresh from bazar. People still do not buy processed foods in cans/ packets. A considerably bigger space is needed to do this processing and usually women do this on floor since the kitchen counters are not spacious enough. Cooking part involves some traditional methods which create a lot of smoke and usually windows help to get the smoke out. Kitchen is closed from 3 sides, connected with the rest of the apartment only through a door. So that the fume does not get inside the apartment. In bigger apartments kitchens are accompanied by kitchen verandas with an additional washing zone and a toilet for domestic helper, never documented virtually, least hygiene space.

The concept of designing apartment kitchen is a borrowed idea from global north and the way kitchen counter is designed is not suitable for Bangladeshi cooking process at all. My online survey shows that more than 90% of the participants have never uploaded photos of their kitchens on social media. Reasons behind these are kitchens do not look like something “posh”/ western, not always organized, mostly occupied with the maids or domestic helpers. For this 90% participants kitchen does not exist in their virtual world.

I have documented two types of changes that people are bringing in how they are using the kitchen now after Facebook invaded. First, some families have started to open the kitchen like western ones. This allowed them to achieve picture perfect snap-able kitchen space, however Desi cooking cannot be done here without having fume or ruining furniture of the adjacent spaces. So, they converted the kitchen adjacent veranda into a cooking zone with stoves and other necessary equipment. Cooking became a difficult job for them and cooking in veranda is highly risky in terms of fire and safety. However, they are doing this to maintain a certain standard in their virtual society. Second, for those who cannot afford bringing changes in kitchen like the previous case, (either for financial reason or for having restriction as a tenant), started to treat kitchen space as a more closed one, never share any images of the kitchen on virtual world, do not let guests to go to the physical kitchen, as if for the outside world, kitchen does not exist as well as the women/ domestic helpers who occupy that space.

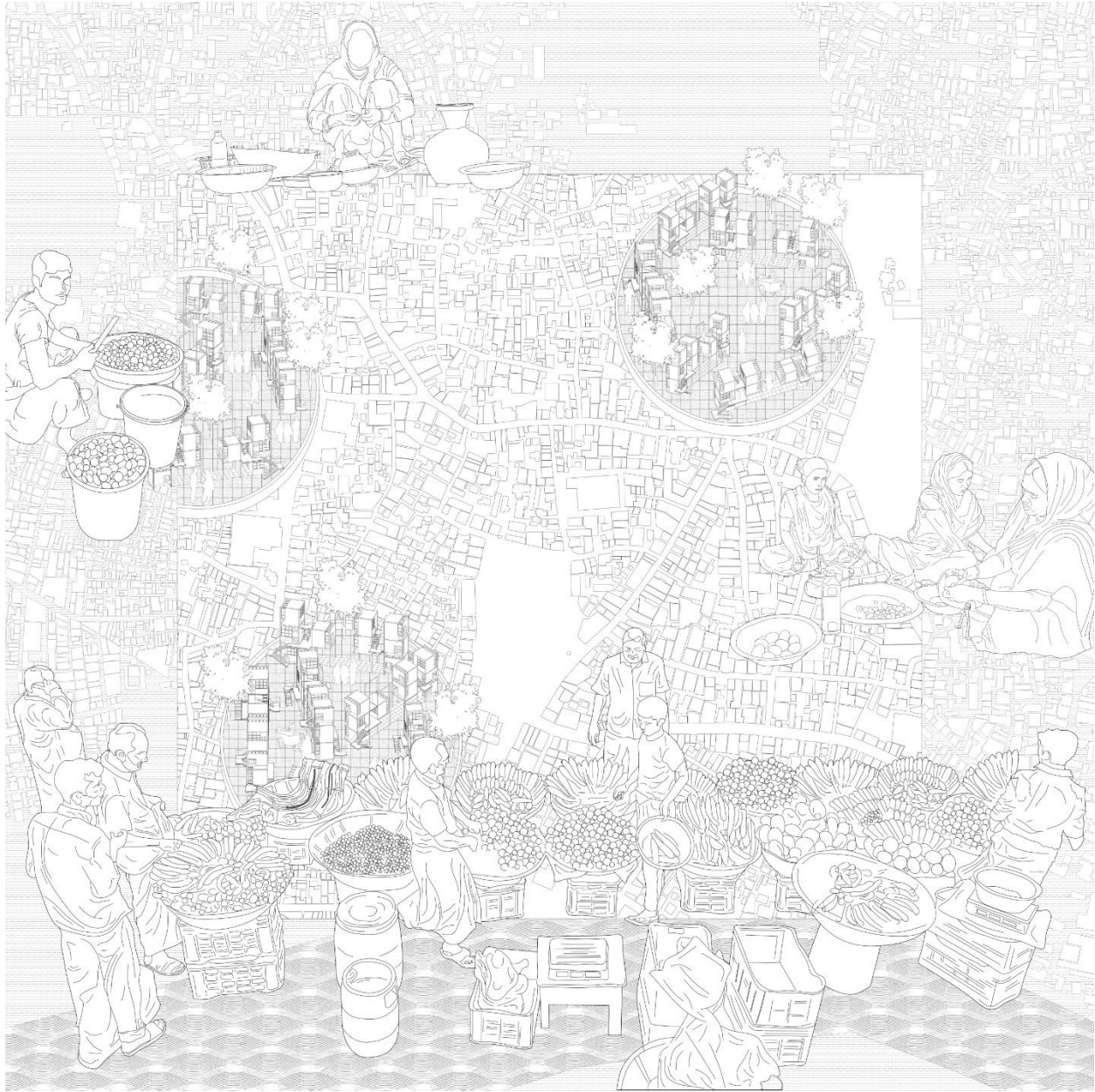
Critical design response and speculation of this scenario reveals in an image of an apartment, from where the kitchen has been totally removed. Only the trace of the kitchen remains two dimensionally on the floor and on the walls. Through augmented reality anyone here will be able to capture photo for social media with modern, western kitchen. All the removed kitchens start to build a separate infrastructure, where cooking will be done and then the foods will be delivered to the apartments. Suddenly the space that the people are trying so hard to hide virtually will be exposed in the physical world at neighborhood level (figure 10) or at urban level (figure 11), in a more vivid way, with the subaltern people, who occupy those space.





*Figure 12: Defamiliarized speculation on separate kitchen infrastructure at neighborhood level supporting the agency of the subalterns*





*Figure 13: Defamiliarized speculation on separate kitchen infrastructure at urban level supporting the agency of the subalterns*

## Notes

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